

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brownfields redevelopment is more than just land acquisition, planning, and real estate financing—it's also about people and their sense of community. Successful efforts to clean and reuse abandoned properties require strong community leadership and meaningful citizen involvement. Moving beyond the basics of public participation, Britain's Groundwork Trust seeks to empower communities so they can reclaim derelict lands in their neighborhoods.

Established in 1981, Groundwork Trust is a non-profit or charitable organization dedicated to the economic, social, and environmental regeneration of communities devastated by the restructuring of the United Kingdom's industrial economy. Groundwork works closely with local government authorities, national agencies, and private companies to generate the resources and necessary support for its nationwide programs and regional initiatives. Given that Groundwork is a unique non-governmental organization (NGO), it has the flexibility to design and implement programs that complement the efforts of traditional governmental agencies and authorities. Its framework presents brownfields practitioners with another innovative model they can transfer and adapt to their own redevelopment efforts.

GROUNDWORK TRUST'S NGO MODEL

Groundwork's headquarters in Birmingham, England administers their national programs and coordinates financial grants and technical assistance to its network of forty-two (42) individual trusts located throughout the country. From a broad policy perspective, Groundwork's national presence gives it sufficient visibility and stature to procure private sponsorships from large companies, such as Barclays Bank, and to obtain funding and support from the central government for its nation-wide programs (i.e., Site-Savers and Changing Places). However, Groundwork accomplishes most of its goals through its regional trusts. They work directly with local governments, business leaders, and community groups to identify the area's most pressing environmental and economic problems and develop further partnerships to implement solutions.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO REGENERATING DERELICT LAND

When compared with mainstream brownfields approaches, Groundwork Trust tackles the broader issue of vacant and idle land, regardless of whether the property includes environmental contamination. Given this definition of brownfields, the scope of their programs is significantly larger. They recognize that abandoned homes or vacant lots in a residential neighborhood can have profound impacts on the envi-

ronment and quality of life of its residents. The recycling of vacant residential properties plays an important role in the successful redevelopment of contaminated industrial properties by bringing back residents to these older, urban neighborhoods. Instead of creating islands or pockets of redeveloped industrial properties, Groundwork takes a more comprehensive view by reclaiming any derelict property.

At the heart of Groundwork's mission is the community. Social regeneration can help the regeneration of the environment and the economy. Virtually all of Groundwork's programs include education and training components. School programs, youth development, and volunteering are core components of Groundwork's holistic approach. Given the high levels of youth unemployment, Groundwork involves teenagers and young adults in the cleanup and reuse of derelict land. By getting them to "roll up their sleeves" and work, Groundwork encourages the community's younger members to take pride in their neighborhood and develop a sense of accomplishment.

Prevention of idle and abandoned property is another programmatic theme of Groundwork. As part of its efforts through a network of Business Environment Associations, regional trusts have helped small business parks upgrade their physical surroundings and premises. Many of these old business parks were losing tenants and had become havens for illegal activities. Instead of waiting until the property became vacant, Groundwork empowered the business parks' tenants to improve their physical surroundings as a way to decrease vandalism and illegal activities, increase business, and bring in new tenants. This successful venture in brown-fields prevention is a strategy that many communities can adopt.

PARALLELS WITH GROUNDWORK/USA

Groundwork's philosophies of brownfields redevelopment and community empowerment have begun to take hold in the Northeastern United States through the creation of Groundwork/USA¹. Like the UK program, Groundwork/USA operates both at the national and local trust level – and both support each other in planning and implementing projects. The local trusts have developed an independence level similar to the UK model.

Groundwork/USA began organizing in 1996. Based in Boston, MA, it is led by a broad steering committee of business, nonprofits, and public organizations and is coordinated by the National Park Service (NPS). It currently supports the local trusts in Bridgeport, CT, Lawrence, MA, and Providence, RI, by pooling resources from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NPS, and other steering committee members. Though the trusts are developing their own format of operation, each focuses on the tangible accomplishments of reclaiming vacant lots, improving public spaces, and leveraging public and private dollars. They pursue the

same holistic approach of community empowerment, capacity-building, encouraging local pride, and providing education and job training.

Funding is another aspect of Groundwork/USA that is distinct from its predecessor Groundwork UK. While most initial financing of local trusts comes from public sources as in the UK, Groundwork/USA focuses on locating more start-up funds from the private sector. Through leveraging the participation of private interests and nonprofit organizations in project communities, Groundwork/USA has been able to put its resources directly to work. In addition to coordinating the budgets and workplans of existing programs to achieve greater efficiency, part of the costs for staff and overhead at the local trusts will be defrayed on a fee-for-service charge to projects.

While the structure and funding is slightly different, Groundwork/USAs mission remains similar to Groundwork UK - reduce blight in communities, redevelop under-used properties, and foster pride among citizens. The US organization has been able to generate interest and achieve some early successes. For example, Groundwork Trust/Providence has put young people to work on its new Art Park project with funds from US EPA's Urban Environmental Initiative, the Trust for Public Lands, municipal bonds, and private foundations. The project is helping a middle school use nearby land for providing outdoor performance space and environmental education to students and neighborhood residents.

Although newly established, Groundwork/USA hopes to expand throughout the Northeast and, possibly, to the national level. Plans are already underway for establishing three new local trusts. Building on its new success, Groundwork/USA is on the road to replicating many of the lessons from its UK counterpart.

A. Setting the Stage - History & Background

Groundwork Trust, a non-profit organization established in 1981, seeks to address the social and environmental degradation caused by the restructuring of the United Kingdom's heavy industries.² A comparison of two critically acclaimed films illustrates the sense of despair that people have experienced in regions of the United Kingdom once completely dependent on a single industry. One film portrays five unemployed men who creatively pursue "alternative" means of work, namely strip dancing. Contrast this with another film that depicts the struggles surrounding a colliery brass band whose members abruptly lose their jobs — and one gains a sense of the desolation that is experienced in these communities.

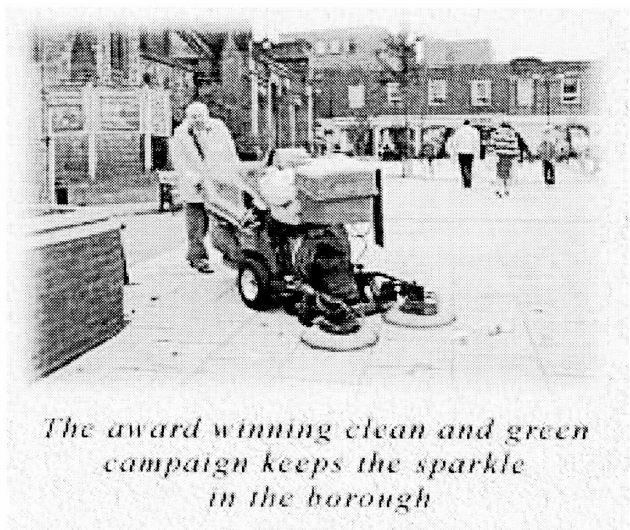
In addition to high crime and unemployment rates, residents in these communities often have inadequate access to recreational facilities, transportation, and educational opportunities. This combination of factors has led to deficient morale for many citizens.

Groundwork Trust's mission is to empower communities such as these to achieve economic, social, and environmental regeneration. Groundwork began as a pilot project in one region. Today 25% of the UK population lives in an area served by one of the 42 individual trusts operating throughout the country.³ Groundwork's activities have been successful in part because their solutions fall outside the purview of traditional government structures.

B. Framework and Approach: People, Environment, Economy

Each of Groundwork's 42 trusts is governed by a board of directors which is drawn from the community it serves. A national foundation office supports the individual trusts through financial grants and technical assistance. A membership agreement ensures that all trusts provide consistent and high quality services. The combined income for the trusts in 1995/1996 was close to £25 million (US\$41 million) comprised of contributions by the central government (41%), local government authorities (33%), the private sector (19%), and the European Union (4%).

Groundwork has adopted a holistic approach to problem-solving. The founders of

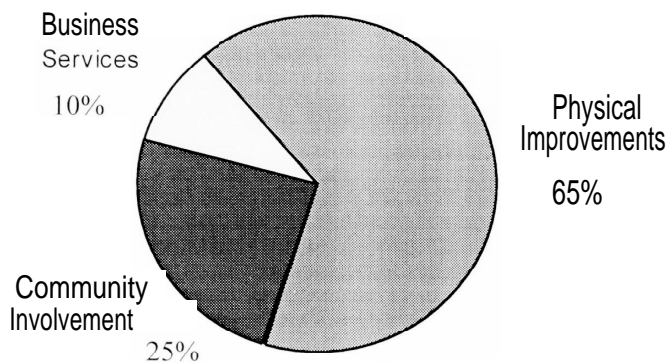


the organization recognized that the people living in these communities were the key to successful regeneration. Although the majority of funds is spent on physical upgrades, these expenditures coincide with education and training opportunities for the

community. School programs, youth development, and volunteering are core components of the Groundwork approach.⁴

Another core component to the Groundwork strategy is the effort to increase the profitability of small and medium-sized companies through efficient environmental stewardship. Thus, Business Environment Associations have been established which provide such services as "Green Start Review," telephone hotlines, seminars, and access to low cost environmental services.

Groundwork Expenditures



Environmental remediation, including brownfields cleanups, encompass the largest share of Groundwork activities.⁵ However, they are performed by directly involving community members to the greatest possible extent in both the decision-making and the actual cleanup. As such, Groundwork's results are gauged by the added value that is brought to projects, through in-kind contributions, volunteer time, and overall quality of the project.⁶

C. Groundworks' Relationship & Role with Local Government Authorities

Local government authorities facilitate redevelopment of derelict lands through mainstream public programs and resources. Groundwork's role is to complement these activities by filling in the gaps that lie beyond the authority of local government. Groundwork's 42 regional trusts have very strong working relationships with the local government authorities in their areas. Many of the regional trusts' advisory boards include local government officials. Groundwork recognizes that its role is to assist the community and the local authorities in their efforts to regenerate vacant lands.

Groundwork frequently serves as a bridge to the private sector, attracting resources that local governments may not be able to solicit. Certain private businesses and foundations may find it easier to give Groundwork funds for public projects instead of the local authorities.⁷ Groundwork also has the ability to creatively leverage local government funds. Rather than being constrained by the annual government budget cycles, Groundwork can spend monies over the lifetime of the project, generally two or three years.

Beyond the flexibility of funding, local governments face other constraints that Groundwork does not. For example, local governments have an entirely different organizational culture. The way they operate often renders a dramatically different

outlook than entrepreneurial groups such as Groundwork. In theory local governments may have the authority to pursue many of the activities that Groundwork does, but they choose not to. One explanation is that local authorities are already encumbered with their day-to-day statutory duties in addition to funding constraints that structurally inhibit their creative abilities. Moreover, the national government in the UK can restrict or expand the power of local governments by creating new local government entities or structures. For example, during the Thatcher Administration, the national government imposed a new system of local development corporations to oversee construction of major infrastructure projects, thereby seriously inhibiting this traditional local government powers.

D. Regulatory and Programmatic Framework - Overview of the UK's Contaminated Land Laws⁹

The United Kingdom in 1995 amended its Environmental Protection Act, significantly affecting the way it handles contaminated land.¹⁰ Section 57 created a new regime for the management of environmental problems associated with contaminated lands, including a specific definition and special procedures for their control.¹¹ These changes implemented a more “risk-based” approach which requires regulatory action only when necessary to prevent unacceptable risks to human health and the environment by taking into account future land use and environmental setting. Given this emphasis on land use, local authorities will play a major role in assessing potential risks from the proposed cleanup and land development.

Local governments’ primary regulatory role rests with boroughs and district councils. This vesting of responsibility with local authorities reflects their inherent land use planning powers and their statutory authority to abate public nuisances.¹² Section 57 requires local authorities to:

- . Inspect and identify contaminated lands in their areas;¹³
- . Consult on the remediation required for individual sites;
- . Issue formal Remediation Notices to require cleanup (if necessary);
- . Perform the remediation if the responsible parties default;
- . Record information about the remediation.¹⁴

Under the liability provisions of this law, the responsibility for paying for remediation follows the essence of the polluter pays principles found in the United States and in other European Community countries. The responsible party must, however, have “caused or knowingly permitted” the contamination. It does appear that a modified form of strict liability applies to the cleanup of contaminated lands in the United Kingdom. For example, if the polluter cannot be found, then liability remains with the current owner or occupier of the site, except in the case of water pollution.¹⁵

The national government does play a important role, albeit indirect, in this new framework for cleaning up contaminated lands. As part of its relatively new mission, the UK’s Environment Agency¹⁶ will:

- . design site-specific guidance on remediation requirements;¹⁷

- promulgate regulations that cover detailed procedural issues;¹⁸
- act as the regulator for certain specifically defined “special sites;”
- produce a national report on contaminated lands; and
- conduct and sponsor technical research in the field.¹⁹

E. Groundwork’s Brownfields Programs

Brownfields redevelopment in the UK has been successfully occurring for at least a decade. Brownfields initiatives in the UK encompass a broader definition of redevelopment that includes the transformation of under-used land regardless if it has environmental contamination. Many of these properties are residential and have become vacant, abandoned or are otherwise derelict.²⁰ Other sites are the result of industrial activity that will require further cleanup before the property can be reused. Whatever the condition of the property, Groundwork’s approach with all projects is to engage the local community spirit and expertise to help form redevelopment initiatives. Groundwork acknowledges that, while directly involving citizens sometimes requires more initial effort, success ultimately depends on community support for the project.

Brownfields Funding: Within the UK, English Partnerships (EP) does most of the funding and program coordination for brownfields redevelopment. As a national agency, EP works on the long-term regeneration of vacant properties, contaminated land cleanups, the reinvestment of former coal-field sites, and financial planning for local communities.²¹ EP also coordinates

its efforts with private interests that seek local investment in brownfields redevelopment. In 1995-96, Britain’s Early Action Program, aimed at reviving derelict lands, was funded with £1 million (\$1,630,700) from EP and £1.7 million (\$2,772,200) from local authorities and private interests.²²

In addition to the regular finding of English Partnerships, the Millenium Commission financially supports redevelopment of derelict and contaminated lands. The Commission, a temporary organization set up by the national government and funded through the national lottery, currently finances a number of projects around the UK. Brownfields redevelopment is a major focus of the Commission as each project must be completed by the year 2000 to celebrate the new millenium.

Both EP and the Commision fund brownfields redevelopment projects coordinated through the Groundwork Trust’s regeneration programs. Currently, Groundwork assists with about 10% of all derelict and contaminated land reclamation in England and Wales,²³ with most of its funds coming from the English Partnerships’ Investment Fund. Two of Groundwork’s national brownfields programs are highlighted below.

1. Site Savers

In a poll taken in 1995, 70% of citizens in the UK agreed that derelict or under-used land greatly reduces the quality of life for those living in affected communities.²⁴ Many of these communities, however, lack the finds to turn these properties back into useful public spaces. In response to this concern, Groundwork created the SiteSav-

ers program with the help of Barclays Bank, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the Wildlife Trusts and Scottish Conservation Projects. The program seeks innovative solutions for fighting derelict land throughout the UK. Sitesavers represent some of the most creative responses for reclaiming under-used land, with the communities themselves serving as the driving force behind these projects.

Through a three-year, £1 million (\$1,630,700) partnership with Barclays Bank, Groundwork and Barclays make sixty (60) annual awards to communities with the greatest need and/or the most original scheme. Training on redevelopment strategies is also supported by the Bank and carried out by Groundwork and other environmental organizations. Most sites that receive funding are redeveloped into recreational areas, community gardens, wildlife refuges, and parks. Local citizen groups design the plans for these public spaces, emphasizing sites that will have a long-lasting, positive impact on the community.

The Murder Mile: Surrey Square, the only open space between a series of five-story blocks of apartments in the London Borough of Southwark, is the scene of one of Barclays SiteSavers' most successful community projects. Once littered with trash and used hypodermic needles, the square nicknamed the "Murder Mile" had become a danger zone within the compound. Children who had once used it as a play yard abandoned it years ago.

In an effort to rescue the area, the Surrey Square Tenants' Association created a regeneration plan and applied for a grant from

Barclays SiteSavers. The money is being spent in ways that will benefit the whole community: a sports facility, a horticulture nursery, and a new play area for young children.

Circle of Success: Groundwork Wrexham and Barclays SiteSavers have collaborated on a project to transform a bleak-looking public space located along council flats in the South Tyneside metropolitan area. At a total cost of £4,500 (\$7,338), a colorful, four meter-wide mosaic was laid as the centerpiece of this now popular gathering spot for local residents. Children helped piece together the complex pattern of the artwork that was chosen by residents, ward councilors, and other local groups.

2. Changing Places

Changing Places was formed to implement the recommendations of a seminal study on the impacts and scope of derelict lands. The study, *Changing Places*, conducted by Professor John Hanley in the early 1980s, focused on what to do with large tracts of vacant land left behind following the demise of the coal mining industry. Derelict land had historically been the province of local authorities, addressed with derelict land grants provided by the central government. Consequently, cleanup of these lands was generally under the purview of local civil engineers who did not adequately focus their energies on redevelopment options. In addition, residents did not play a central role in the cleanup and reuse decisions until the 1990s.

Changing Places now brings these issues together as one of Groundwork's most comprehensive programmatic initiatives, com-